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REPLY

TO THE

Rejoinder of Maj. Gen. John Pope

TO THE

APPEAL

OF

Maj. Gen. Fitz John Porter,

FOR A

RE-EXAMINATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

COURT MARTIAL

IN HIS CASE.

MORRISTOWN, N. J.
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REPLY.

MORRISTOWN, N. J., *Jan. 29th*, 1870.

General WILLIAM T. SHERMAN,

Commanding U. S. Armies.

GENERAL:—During the years that have intervened since my trial, I have borne in silence and with what patience I possessed, the cruel and unjust criticisms of journalists, who, lacking full information or blinded by prejudice, have, in many instances, spared no opportunity to pervert facts, misinterpret motives, traduce character and perpetuate the memory of a cruel wrong.

I have refused to permit journalists, who have volunteered the espousal of my defence, the sanction they deemed necessary from me, and such as have by word or pen attempted my vindication, deemed my approval unnecessary, the cause being a public one.

There has been no period when I have not sought the vindication of my name and reputation; but in every effort I have appealed to the government, in whose service my best years were spent, and in whose keeping alone my honor and reputation rested. To forestall the action of government by newspaper articles, seemed to me lacking in respect for and confidence in its ultimate decision.

My appeals have been forwarded to the proper military officers in every instance; have been open for the inspection and criticism of every person interested in them, and up to a recent period, have been contested through government channels alone.

It is possible I have erred in my estimate of the proprieties of my case. Naught else would have restrained me heretofore, for I have possessed for years such testimony in my behalf as to

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insure a prompt vindication from the press of my country. Potential and gratifying as such vindications would be to me, my aim has been no less than a soldier's should be, and government alone can satisfy my demands.

With these purposes and acts in the case it will not be difficult for you to imagine my surprise upon reading the annexed article taken from a New York City paper—ostensibly emanating from a correspondent of a Cincinnatti journal, but really being the production of Major General John Pope, as the use of the personal pronoun in many instances indicates. Whether the correspondent was derelict in duty in not recopying General Pope's manuscript and obliterating these unmistakable "ear marks," it is not for me to comment.

The communication is General Pope's, save a few unimportant lines. He has apparently abandoned the hope of defeating my application before the government for a re-hearing; seems to concur with the view of the correspondent whom he favors with his intimacy and manuscript, as to the undue influence that is being brought upon members of the administration, and seeks by the publication of garbled extracts, to turn the tide of public opinion, which in my own case, as in all others, finally turns with unerring instinct to the right.

After stating, among other matters, that on the 29th of August, 1862, a severe battle was fought on the old field of Bull Run, known as the first day of the second battle of that name, General Pope produces, as evidence of my criminal purpose to abandon him to defeat, the following dispatch to Generals McDowell and King:

"I found it impossible to communicate by crossing the woods to Groveton. The enemy are in strong force on this road, and as they appear to have driven our forces back, the firing of the enemy having advanced and ours retired, I have determined to withdraw to Manassas. I have attempted to communicate with McDowell and Sigel, but my messengers have run into the enemy. They have gathered artillery and cavalry and infantry, and the advancing masses of dust show the enemy coming in force. *I am now going to the head of the column to see what is passing and how affairs are going, and will communicate with you.* Had you not better send your train back?

"F. J. PORTER,
Major General."

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The words I have italicised, General Pope has entirely left out in his publication. (Court Martial, p. 31.) They are words that indicate the fullest purpose to be informed before I definitely acted upon my warning to Generals McDowell and King. And these words General Pope expunges from my dispatch to suit his purpose! I will not assume to characterize such an offence against common honesty.

My action was based upon sound military principle, and will bear a soldier's test. When I wrote the dispatch I believed, from report, our right was retiring under pressure of superior force, and knowing that Longstreet was before me with overpowering numbers, and reported to be pressing, I deemed it probable my withdrawal would become a necessity if my force was to be made effective.

After stigmatising *my* "purpose" to suit which *his* garbled dispatch is published, General Pope concludes this branch of his subject as follows:

> "Was there in the mind of any honest man, citizen or soldier, any honorable course open to him except of these two? Not so, thought Porter. With his efficient corps, equal in numbers to nearly one-third of the whole army—superior in freshness and in efficiency to any corps in the field—he deliberately states that he intends to march off, under these appalling circumstances, to Manassas Junction, precisely in the opposite direction from the army, and to abandon them to the disaster which he says he believes they were suffering. Can any words add force to this simple statement?"

It seems unfortunate that such high-toned sentiments and reflections should be wasted; but, inasmuch as *I did not withdraw* (having gone to the front and found such action unnecessary), I imagine you will concur with me as to their in-appropriateness.

There is no evidence on the record, nor can any be produced to show that my command retreated; but, to the contrary, it remained all day where McDowell left me, save when moved to induce or indicate an attack. When, therefore, General Pope says I "*pretended*" to believe his forces were being driven, in order to have an excuse for the withdrawal of mine, he does me no harm, and only compels a more universal belief in his now thoroughly established infirmity.

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punishment ended all official connection I have since had with anything that related to the operations I conducted in Virginia."

The letter of the article may perhaps not have been violated but in spirit its violation was perfected, for if General Pope was the "accuser or prosecutor," as he *now* appears, then my Court should have been appointed by the President, and not by the General-in-chief.

I am, General,

With high respect,

Your obedient Servant,

FITZ JOHN PORTER.

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